

## ENSURING A BEAUTIFUL FINISH

**ABOUT NORTHWEST FACTORY FINISHES.** Northwest Factory Finishes (NWFF) beautifies and protects over 10 million feet of building products each year, including composite lap siding, panels, trim, soffit, and fascia. Based in Bonner, Montana, NWFF's 156,000 square-foot facility sits on 11 acres along the Blackfoot River. The company grew out of a sole proprietorship established in 1992 with three employees, and now employs over 65 residents of beautiful northwestern Montana.

**THE CHALLENGE.** Already a key player in the Pacific Northwest, NWFF was in a growth state, and market data showed enormous opportunity for growth in Alaska, on the West Coast, and in the Southwest. However, executive management was finding it difficult to stay on top of the day-to-day production challenges while taking the business to the next level. The company needed to grow its distribution network while continuing to take care of existing customers with whom it had long-standing contracts. NWFF called on the Montana Manufacturing Extension Center (MMEC), part of the MEP National Network™, for assistance.

**MEP CENTER'S ROLE.** A member of MMEC's staff assumed the role of Director of Operations at NWFF for three days per week over the course of 17 months, leading the company through numerous improvement projects. First, the MMEC director focused on workplace organization, facility layout, material handling, and reduction of setup time and batch size. These actions resulted in increased production, better response time for customers, and opportunities for workforce advancement. Next, the company doubled production lines to increase capacity and meet growing demand. NWFF developed, designed and tested a new product, researched and purchased new equipment, and designed and implemented a flow production system. The MMEC director ensured Standard Operating Procedures were up-to-date, and established programs for quality metrics tracking and equipment maintenance. MMEC also assisted with creating and posting multiple position descriptions and facilitating the screening and selection process.

Sales have continued to grow steadily. NWFF has since purchased one of its competitors on the West Coast, setting up a full operation at that location. The company has successfully expanded its product lines into Alaska, the West Coast, the Southwest and into the Midwest. It has also successfully implemented some production automation, and is continuing to research new ways to automate.

"The assistance we received from MMEC was a key factor in the successful growth we've experienced over the last four years. Without it, we simply would not have been able to accomplish what we have in the same amount of time. MMEC has been and continues to be a critical partner for us."

-Britt Fred, President

## RESULTS



Increased sales by over **\$4.8** million



Created **26** jobs



Generated over **\$1** million in cost-savings



Invested almost **\$3** million in company expansion

## CONTACT US



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